

October 6, 2004

Hello,

If you lead a troop of high achievers your most essential skill is delegation.

Not passing the buck. Not forcing your delegates to merely repeat your ways and style, but REAL delegation.

For a look at what good delegation actually means, read on.

All the best,

Joe Grant  
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P.S. We provide seasoned counsel, executive coaching, and training to agencies around the country. If it has to do with getting an agency running right, chances are we've seen it and solved it. Find out more at [our website](#).

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## *Leading the Leaders*



Delegation. It sounds so simple - you just tell people what to do, right? - but it can trip you up and freeze promising careers.

What's so tough about it? Well for one thing, your own success makes it difficult to delegate.

You got where you are because you're the one who makes things happen and keeps clients and bosses happy. So when it's time to delegate, you naturally expect things to be done your way - the way you know works - and rationalize that's how everyone on your team will avoid disaster.

See the problem between the lines?

Your way becomes the gold standard because it's always worked and besides, it's unconscionable to allow screw ups. And though you claim your approach guarantees everyone has opportunity to learn and grow, how would you explain to a client that a project tanked because you



## Coaching The Best

Even star players need help achieving their best. We provide a unique service: confidential career-enhancing coaching exclusively for communications agency executives to get people on the right path to success. Get in touch with Joe Grant to discuss the coaching needs at your agency. Email [joe@joegrantconsulting.com](mailto:joe@joegrantconsulting.com).

## Doing E-mail Right

Friend Harry Hoover of Hoover ink PR penned a [brief instructive piece on planning e-mail marketing campaigns](#) well worth reading. Harry publishes his own monthly e-mail newsletter focused on PR, available at [his website](#).

## Travel Reqs

ANA's national conference October 7-10 in Naples, FL will cover building successful

WANTED your people to make mistakes so they'd learn?

Let's go a little deeper. At the heart of misguided delegation is a very real fear of failure. Yup, many high achievers are bad delegators because they can't stomach something going wrong. In coaching senior agency executives over many years it's obvious that delegation is directly related to risk tolerance and personal (job) security. As one agency CEO told us, "Of course I delegate and they can do it however they want. But there's their way and the right way." Translated, that means "the way least likely to embarrass me and screw up my career."

Another reason delegation is problematic is that a lot of times it's not delegation at all. It's passing the buck. A friend who counsels agency owners for a living recently explained.

Too often, he writes, senior agency managers relegate the implementation of a good idea to juniors without the necessary resources, knowledge or authority to make it sing. It could be the execution of an advertising idea or some new internal procedure. The difference between "delegating" and "passing the buck" is the degree to which the delegator understands and envisions the implementation process. If he understands it and what it requires, it's delegating. If he cannot envision the basic tactics that will be undertaken to get the thing done, he's just passing the buck.

Just saying "Do this" is not delegating.

You've got to be explicit about what you want the outcome to be; unexpressed expectations are planned resentments. You've got to accompany assigned responsibilities with appropriate authority. You've got to make sure they know HOW to do it. You've got to restrain yourself while you watch learning take place in its rawest form, i.e. with occasional near misses and sometimes breathtaking foul-ups. Can you sit there calmly anticipating that your folks will create startling new solutions and better than anticipated results when things don't go "your way"?

Sure, you can avoid all this heartburn if you do the important things yourself. When the big stuff comes along and you say "there isn't time to delegate," what it really means is there's no one you trust to do it your way. If you have to do everything yourself because your folks can't, well, it signals you're making bad hiring decisions and then compounding things by failing to guide and grow your staff. Not a good way to operate if you're in charge. That kind of thinking is frankly both short-sighted and an injustice.

brands, marketing accountability and ROI, and innovation and creativity. Visit the [Association of National Advertisers website](#).

The Direct Marketing Association has their big to-do in New Orleans October 16-20. See [DMA Annual](#). "Marketing to Teens" will discover how to tap this \$170 billion market October 26-27 in Beverly Hills. Put on by Adweek and sister pubs. More at [What Teens Want](#).

## On The Nightstand

Some books of interest. [Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office](#) by Lois Frankel is written to help women overcome self-defeating business world behaviors. Also noteworthy: [The Leadership Moment](#) by Michael Useem which came our way from Tom Sullivan at Princeton Partners. In the category of interesting diversion, Buck Laird (whose office in Honolulu at Laird Christianson you couldn't find without a compass) shares [The Riddle of the Compass](#) by Amir Aczel, a great adventure tale about getting from Point A to Point B. And if words and commas are your thing, don't miss [Eats, Shoots & Leaves](#) by the cheeky Lynne Truss. Witty and instructive - a must-read for every writer.

## About Grant Consulting

Grant Consulting, formed in 1992 by Joe Grant, is a consultative resource for advertising agency principals who want to improve their companies. The firm works

Shortsighted since you'll limit your own growth and wind up marching in place because you haven't taught your people to think for themselves. Unjust because you'll subtly stunt the growth of potential successors whom you should be preparing for greater authority. How are you going to move up or out otherwise? Capping off talented people before they achieve their potential is not only a dumb thing to do, it's unfair to the people in your thrall.

You know, there's a word that describes good delegators: leaders. You can't be a leader if you're not leading the next batch of leaders by delegating well.

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exclusively with senior managers to help them discover and then reach their full potential. Copyright 2004 Grant Consulting Associates, Inc. All rights reserved. We encourage sharing in whole or in part if copyright and attribution are included. Contact us at:

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